

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /068 W

-----270207Z 126751 /63

R 261610Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6549

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE TUNIS 2892

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:PINT, PINS, TS

SUBJECT: POPULAR UNITY MOVEMENT RESPONDS TO GOT ARRESTS
OF BEN SALAHISTS

REF: TUNIS 1879

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. APRIL 18 EDITION OF "AFRIQUE-ASIE"
MAGAZINE CONTAINED WHAT APPEARS TO BE POPULAR UNITY
MOVEMENT'S (MUP) RESPONSE TO RECENT GOT ARRESTS OF
BEN SALAH ASSOCIATES (SEE REFTEL). ARTICLE, WHICH IS
ENTITLED "LA RIPOSTE", STATES THAT IN PRESS CONFERENCE
HELD IN PARIS ON APRIL 4, MUP REPRESENTATIVE CLAIMED
MOVEMENT HAD NEVER SUGGESTED THAT "FORCE AND VIOLENCE" BE
USED TO OVERHTROW THE REGIME, AS GOT HAS ACCUSED. MUP
CHARGED THAT GOT IS ALSO TRYING TO DISCREDIT MUP'S
"POLITICAL THESIS" OF A DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE BY RAISING
MENACING SPECTOR OF "COLLECTIVIZATION" OF 1967-1969.
ARTICLE STRONGLY ATTACKED GOVERNMENT FOR ARREST OF THE
TWENTY-SEVEN PERSONS CHARGED WITH SUBVERSIVE "BEN SALAHIST"
ACTIVISTS. ARTICLE NOTES THAT MOST OF THESE WERE PSD
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OFFICIALS PRIOR TO 1969 "COUP DE FORCE" AGAINST BEN SALAH
AND CLAIMS THAT GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE IS TO CREATE
IMAGINARY PLOT IN ORDER TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM "CRISIS"
CAUSED BY GOVERNMENT'S REACTIONARY POLICIES. GOVERNMENT
IS ALSO CHARGED WITH "MACHIAVELLICALLY REDUCING EX-PRIME MINISTER
BAHI LADGHAM TO SILENCE" AND WITH "SELECTIVE REPRESSION
AND TORTURE" OF OTHER WELL-KNOWN OPPOSITION FIGURES.

ARTICLE CONTINUES BY CALLING ON "ALL PATRIOTIC, DEMOCRATIC AND PROGRESSIVE FORCES" TO WORK TOGETHER. IT NOTES A RECENT DECLARATION OF THE "TUNISIAN COMMUNIST PARTY" AGAINST THE "ANTI-DEMOCRATIC AND PRO-CAPITALIST NOUIRA GOVERNMENT," AS WELL AS STUDENT OPPOSITION TO RESULTS OF RECENT UGET CONFERENCE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. COMMENT: ABOVE RESPONSE IS FOR MOST PART STANDARD MUP FARE. MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF ARTICLE IS EMPHASIS PUT ON MUP'S NON-VIOLENT CHARACTER, AN OBVIOUS EFFORT TO BROADEN MOVEMENT'S APPEAL AMONG TUNISIAN MASSES, MOST OF WHOM ARE APPALLED AT THOUGHT OF OPEN CIVIL STRIFE. ANOTHER OBJECTIVE SEEMS TO BE TO CREATE ALLIANCES WITH OTHER DISSATISFIED ELEMENTS IN TUNISIAN SOCIETY INCLUDING STUDENTS, COMMUNISTS AND DISENCHANTED DESTOURIANS. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, ARTICLE HAS HAD LITTLE POLITICAL IMPACT, "AFRIQUE-ASIE" IS BANNED IN TUNISIA AND ONLY SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE HAVE SEEN ARTICLE OR ARE AWARE OF ITS EXISTENCE. EMBASSY HAS NOT SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING WHICH WOULD GIVE CREDENCE TO ARTICLE'S CLAIM THAT TUNISIAN COMMUNIST PARTY HAS COME BACK TO LIFE.
MULCAHY

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